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'All about the children'

Many agencies offer health tips for black infants

By Nikki Cobb
Staff Writer

Amid the music, the dancing, the contests and prizes, visitors to Thursday's Black Infant Health Fall Healthy Baby Celebration had the opportunity to learn that regardless of their problem, there are agencies to help and people who care.

More than 25 community organizations, including the American Cancer Society, Community Hospital of San Bernardino, San Bernardino Police Department, Inland Empire Health Plan and Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County, participated in the afternoon event at San Bernardino's Carousel Mall.

"I've been to other events, and I know they have good benefits," said Vivian Young of San Bernardino. "There's information for the children. It's all about the children."

Chauntelle Parker was on hand to promote breast-feeding with the Women, Infants and Children program.

Parker said that despite the benefits of breast-feeding, some black and immigrant women have misconceptions that prevent them from doing it.

"The information isn't out there for them," Parker said. "And there are cultural barriers, too. Because (baby) formula is expensive, they figure it must be the best."

Jennifer Baptiste-Smith is the black-infant coordinator for the county Department of Public Health. She said the second annual event was aimed at black infants and their mothers because black babies suffer higher mortality rates than white infants.

Baptiste-Smith said there are myriad reasons why black babies die disproportionately, including a lack of prenatal care, inability to keep doctor appointments and poor nutrition.

She said Thursday's event was a chance to link mothers with the service. **See BABIES | Page B2**



Jennifer Cappuccio/Staff Photographer

Maïa Carrington of San Bernardino, left, helps fingerprint her son Harry with Citizen Volunteer Patrolman Edwin Garrett of the San Bernardino Police Department on Thursday at the Black Infant Health Fall Healthy Baby Celebration at the Carousel Mall in San Bernardino. More than 25 community organizations participated.

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Black-infant coordinator for the county Department of Public Health

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VICES they need to raise healthy babies.

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Baptiste-Smith said the three biggest obstacles to mothers getting the help they need are finances, transportation and an inability to navigate the system of insurance, health programs and other vital resources available to them.

It's events like Thursday's, she said, that she hopes will help them clear those hurdles.

Debra Hall of Highland said she brought her son,

13-year-old Abram Challa, to the health fair hoping to learn more about attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, which Abram suffers from.

Hall was disappointed not to find information on her son's specific disorder, but was nonetheless pleased at the array of other options available.

Hall had Abram fingerprinted and photographed by the Police Department. She also learned about the rate of black-infant mortality, which she said was an eye-opener.

"I didn't know how many African-American children die," she said. "It's scary and shocking."

Hall said she wants the best care she can provide.

"It's a great opportunity to make sure my child is healthy," she said.

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